



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Commissioner Bobby Cagle joins First Lady Sandra Deal
for “Read Across Georgia” Initiative**

School Visits stress importance of Early Learning and Reading

Atlanta, Ga., (March 16, 2012) – Bobby Cagle, commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, will join Georgia’s First Lady Sandra Deal next week for her “Read Across Georgia” campaign.

Mrs. Deal and Commissioner Cagle will visit Pre-K classes at Dunwoody Springs Elementary School in Sandy Springs on **Monday, March 19, 2012**, at 1:00 PM.

The First Lady launched the initiative earlier this year in support of Governor Nathan Deal’s goal of increasing the percentage of children reading at grade level by the completion of third grade. The governor has proclaimed March “Read Across Georgia” month. The First Lady and Commissioner Cagle will read the book “Who I’d Like to Be” by Elizabeth Brown to students and emphasize the necessity of mentorship and the importance of being reading-proficient.

“The governor pointed out in his State of the State address this year that children who cannot read at a third grade level by the time they finish the third grade are more likely to drop out of school, go to prison and have higher unemployment rates later in life,” said Commissioner Cagle. “This statistic shows the important roles that our Pre-K and early care and learning teachers play in developing our children for their personal success later in life. I am always honored to be with Mrs. Deal, who is a great role model for parents and teachers alike.”

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“We must make a concerted effort to increase the percentage of children reading well and independently at grade-level,” said First Lady Deal. “By focusing our efforts on our youngest learners, we have the ability to teach them crucial skills that lay the ground work for all their future academic and career endeavors.”

Also joining the First Lady and Commissioner Cagle is Sylvia Russell, AT&T Georgia State President. AT&T will announce it is donating 5,000 copies of the book “Who I’d Like to Be” to pre-school students across the state through a \$20,000 contribution.

“I’m proud to say AT&T’s commitment to supporting education spans decades and continues today,” said Russell. “Providing books to Georgia’s children at an early age will help encourage reading and literacy.”

The First Lady’s goal is to visit every school district across the state over the next three years.

About Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages the voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.